

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	EEB-00	AF-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	INL-00
	DOTE-00	DHSE-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VCI-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	MOFM-00	MOF-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00	OIG-00	NIMA-00	PM-00
	SCT-00	DOHS-00	FMPC-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	NCTC-00
	ASDS-00	CBP-00	SCRS-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00
	SAS-00	FA-00	SWCI-00	/000W			

-----6D954F 271229Z /38

R 271215Z MAY 09  
 FM AMEMBASSY ASMARA  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0298  
 INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
 AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI  
 CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
 CIA WASHDC  
 CJTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ  
 COMUSNAVCENT  
 DIA WASHDC  
 HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
 JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL  
 NSC WASHDC  
 SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000163

DEPARTMENT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/TIA/ITA, DS/IP/SPC/SO, AND AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/27/2029  
 TAGS: [ASEC](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ER](#) [PINR](#)  
 SUBJECT: DECREASING MILITARY PRESENCE IN ASMARA

REF: A. ASMARA 160  
[1](#)B. ASMARA 159

Classified By: CDA Melinda Tabler-Stone for Reason 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (C) The military presence in Asmara has decreased in Asmara since the May 24th independence day celebrations, but is still above normal levels. Soldiers are manning static positions, but are no longer asking Eritreans for their identification cards and the mass arrests appear to have subsided. There were no reported incidents that interfered with any of the celebrations (Reftel A).

[1](#)2. (C) Post observed a higher than normal security presence in Asmara in the run-up to the May 24 holiday. RSO spotted several military pickup trucks around Asmara with varying degrees of weaponry mounted in the back, including a 20mm crew-served weapon and 7.62 PKM and 12.7 mm NSV machine guns. (NOTE: The GSE has not deployed these types of weapons openly in recent history). Security forces conducted late night raids at several Asmara hotels. Plainclothes security officers were present at many traffic circles searching individuals with hand-held metal detectors and several plainclothes officers were observed talking into radios in Asmara. Police/military presence was extremely high at many of the nightly festivals. Eritreans told RSO they were physically searched while walking in Asmara and had to justify each item in their purses/backpacks. The police made pedestrians drink liquids they were carrying to prove they weren't dangerous and made women spray perfumes they were carrying on their faces. RSO received two reports of Eritreans who were shot and killed when they ran away from soldiers patrolling Asmara and its environs. Security at the main ceremony at the national stadium on May 24 was likewise high, with armed soldiers posted every 20 ft along the bottom tier of the grandstand and tightly controlled traffic outside the stadium.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: The military presence in Asmara will likely decline gradually over the next few weeks and many of the arrested Eritreans and ethnic Ethiopians should be released as well. Post has not received any reports of incidents involving post personnel or other Americans in country.

